

## **Natural Resources Protection Zoning / Open Space Residential Design**

### **Basic elements**

Development of Natural Resources Protection Zoning (NRPZ) or Open Space Residential Design (OSD) is an important and efficient way to protect land throughout your city or town, while keeping land in private ownership. Each municipality's zoning may be slightly different to accommodate the specific characteristics and needs of their community, however, there are a few common elements that must be in every proposed bylaw/ordinance for it to qualify as NRPZ, and funding through the Landscape Partnership program. NRPZ zoning must be applied to all currently undeveloped land outside of identified higher density city/town center(s) or other appropriate designated development district(s).

### **Common elements of NRPZ zoning:**

- There is no “underlying zoning;” NRPZ is the zoning for the selected area.
- Subdivisions must comply with NRPZ requirements in order to be a use by-right; proposed deviations, including conventional subdivisions where the entire parcel is divided into houselots and streets, require a special permit. The special permit proposal must meet the objectives of the zoning district as least as well as an NRPZ plan.
- NRPZ is an option by site plan review for non-subdivision development (i.e., ANR and condominiums).
- The number of allowed dwelling units is calculated up-front by formula. There are no “yield plans” or conventional subdivision plans drawn. Constrained lands, such as wetlands and steep slopes, are wholly or partially subtracted from the gross project area; the remainder land is then divided by a selected “density divisor” of 3–10 or more acres per dwelling unit to arrive at a unit count. (Although a reduction in dwelling units from a conventional plan is possible, that is not always the case. Numerous examples based on actual properties have shown that the same or even additional units are possible under NRPZ.)
- The percentages of required open space protection are high, from 65–90%, leaving a significantly smaller area, between 10–35%, for development. Proposals for protection of 80% or less must be justified.
- Developed and open space areas are carefully selected on the parcel by way of a “conservation analysis” process built into the subdivision regulations.
- Greater design flexibility is offered in the developable areas (e.g., shared driveways, diversity of housing types, no specified lot sizes, frontages, or yard setbacks).
- Earned density bonuses and/or transfers of development rights are available to increase the number of allowed dwelling units in exchange for public benefits such as the provision of affordable housing or public access.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Natural Resource Protection Zoning: The Green Side of Smart Growth (Explanatory Document)  
[http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/bylaws/green\\_side\\_smart\\_growth\\_nprz.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/bylaws/green_side_smart_growth_nprz.pdf)
- Model Bylaw for NRPZ/OSD <http://www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech-assistance/guidance-technical-assistance/ma-smart-growth-smart-energy-toolkit.html>
- OSD/NRPZ overview, from MA Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit:  
[http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/pages/mod-OSD.html](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-OSD.html)
- Town of Shutesbury Zoning Bylaw (see Article V)  
[http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/bylaws/shutesbury\\_zoning.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/bylaws/shutesbury_zoning.pdf)

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